A Comparative Study of Monolingual and Bilingual EFL Learners on Language Learning Strategies Use: A Case of Iranian High School Students

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This study was conducted to compare the language learning strategies used by bilingual (Arab-Persian) and monolingual (Persian) EFL learners in Iran. Among a pool of more than 650 students studying in grade one in two high schools located in Ahvaz city, 200 learners (100 monolingual and 100 bilingual) were randomly selected as the research participants. The prime data collection instrument utilized in this study was SILL questionnaire. An oral interview was also designed after SILL questionnaire administration to check the written and oral responses. The results of the study revealed the superiority of bilingual learners on four strategy categories. Bilingual learners tended to use social and compensation strategies most frequently while monolinguals preferred social and affective strategies.

Key words: language learning strategies, direct strategies (cognitive, memory, compensation), indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective, social)

In the last decades, there has been a gradual but significant shift within the field of language learning and teaching resulting in greater emphasis on language learners and learning process rather than language teachers and teaching. As a result of this shift on learners and the important role that they can play in the process of learning new languages, a significant amount of research on language learning strategies (henceforth LLS) has been done in the last few decades. Learners' language learning strategies have widely been recognized as one of the most important factors in the facilitation of learning new languages, and thus a crucial issue that should be addressed by both learners and teachers. Rubin (1987) defined learning strategies as "strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which learners construct and affect learning directly" (p. 23). In fact, whatever a learner does in order to facilitate the process of language learning may be regarded as a learning strategy. LLS are Learners' behaviors and thoughts during language learning intended to "influence learners' encoding process" (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986, p. 315). Bialystock (1978) states that LLS are "optional means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language" (p. 71). Based on Bialystock's (1987) statement, LLS play an important role in developing learners' linguistic competence. In their definitive study on LLS, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) defined the concept of LLS as "special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p. 1). The interesting point in O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) definition is that LLS can be both Physical (behaviors) and mental (thoughts). Oxford (1990) expanded the definition by stating that LLS include"specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p. 8). Oxford's (1990) definition of LLS implies that learners are generally aware of what techniques or approaches they have used to facilitate the process of language learning.

Based on the above-mentioned definitions, language learning strategies are learner-generated and this implies that almost all learners have their own learning strategies, but the issue needed to be taken into account is that the

use of learning strategies varies among learners as learners themselves vary. Different learners may employ learning strategies with varying degrees of success. Chastain (1988) argues:

> All students have learning strategies; some are successful and some are not. Since one can assume that they have learnt their learning strategies, one can draw the positive conclusion that they can unlearn those that are unproductive and learn those that are more productive or that they can learn to apply the successful learning strategies more appropriately (p.164).

There are some individual factors that affect the choice of language learning strategies. According to Oxford (1994), some of the factors include proficiency level, gender, motivation, personality, learning styles, ethnicity and aptitude. Hadley (2003) referred to some individual factors among learners some of which are: field independence, breadth of categorization, leveling-sharpening, impulsiveness-reflectiveness and flexibility-inflexibility.

The main purpose of this study is to examine if Iranian bilingual EFL learners would react differently from their monolingual peers to the new language. The present study is intended to explore whether bilingual students employ language learning strategies differently as compared to the monolingual students. According to Lam (2001), "a bilingual individual is someone who has the ability to communicate in two languages alternately" (p. 93). Monolingual people do not have such a capacity. They communicate in just one language, i.e., their native language. Research on cognitive and metalinguistic abilities of bilingual children seems to lead to the conclusion that bilinguals might benefit from this specific learning experience. The past experience of learning a new language seems to be a positive factor that facilitates learning a third language. It is thus believed that bilinguals would learn a third language in a different and more effective and efficient way than monolinguals. Thomas (as cited in Keshavarz & Astaneh, 2004) believes that this relative success is attributable to advanced cognitive skills and effective learning strategies use.

Teachers, especially those who teach in bilingual and bicultural regions,

should keep in mind that they are working in an environment with unique conditions. There is no homogeneity in the classrooms in which they teach. There are monolingual learners who are experiencing learning a new language for the first time, and there are bilingual learners who have experienced learning a new language once before. Teachers should be armed with both the knowledge and skill to be able to manage such heterogenic classrooms. Bilingual learners usually come from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds as compared to monolingual learners and thus may need different teaching methods, different tasks, different class activities and even different assignments. Oxford (1990) believes that teachers should assess their students' strategy use. She adds that strategy assessment can lead to greater understanding of learning strategies employed by language learners and better management of teaching activities.

Based on the above argument, the study is motivated to answer the following questions:

1. Do bilingual EFL learners use direct LLS more often than monolingual ones?
2. Do bilingual EFL learners use indirect LLS more often than monolingual ones?

The proposed research questions were converted into the following null hypotheses:

H01: Bilingual learners are not different from their monolingual peers on direct LLS use.

H02: Bilingual learners are not different from their monolingual peers on indirect LLS use.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Despite different definitions and views, language learning researchers have acknowledged the significant role of LLS in helping learners learn a new

language more easily. According to Cook (2001) self-directed learning is an approach used in the classroom by successful teachers giving the learners the opportunity to "take on responsibility for their learning" (p. 130). Based on this approach, teachers guide students to choose the strategies which affect their learning and heighten the learners' awareness of LLS.
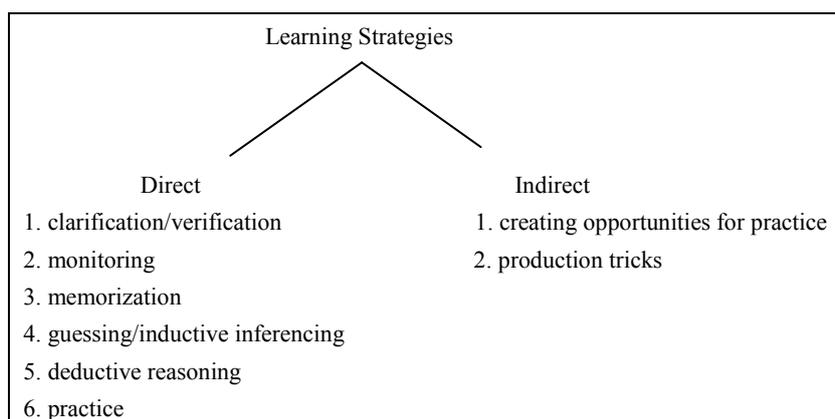
According to Macaro (as cited in Cohen, 2004) the classification of LLS was primarily based on the theory of cognition. This means that learning strategies are used to retrieve and store new information in the brain. With the passage of time this information becomes automatic (unconscious). Reviewing different taxonomies proposed by different researchers, shows that almost all researchers have focused on the cognitive domain of LLS.

A number of early studies (Bialystok, 1978; Rubin, 1981) were done aiming at identifying all the probable strategies used by learners and sorting them in an appropriate way. Bialystok (1978) categorized LLS into four subcategories: functional practicing, monitoring, formal language practicing and inferencing. Rubin (1981) identified two types of LLS: direct (learning) strategies and indirect (communication) strategies. The subcategories of these two broad strategies are shown in figure 1. The next wave of studies in the field of LLS put more emphasis on providing comprehensive classification of LLS. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) categorized learning strategies into three subcategories:

1. Metacognitive strategies: self-regulatory strategies used to manage one's own learning such as planning, monitoring and evaluation.
2. Cognitive strategies: manipulation or transformation of learning materials.
3. Socio/affective strategies: interaction with other people or affective control over one's own learning such as asking questions.

The most comprehensive classification of language learning strategies is Oxford's taxonomy based on which Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was designed. Oxford (1990) identified six major groups of L2 learning strategies: direct strategies including cognitive, metacognitive,

and memory strategies and indirect strategies including: compensatory, affective, and social strategies.

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│                     Learning Strategies                        │
│                          /\                                    │
│                         /  \                                   │
│                        /    \                                  │
│          Direct                        Indirect                │
│  1. clarification/verification   1. creating opportunities for │
│  2. monitoring                      practice                   │
│  3. memorization                 2. production tricks          │
│  4. guessing/inductive inferencing                             │
│  5. deductive reasoning                                        │
│  6. practice                                                   │
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FIGURE 1
Rubin's LLS Classification

Nowadays, learners' full engagement in the process of language learning is considered to be an essential issue with teachers' role being confined to guidance and supervision. The emergence of new terminology in the field of language learning as learner-centered approach or self-directed learning indicates on the recognition of learners' role in learning and the importance of the strategies they employ when encountering learning problems. Teachers are no longer considered to be the total authority in the classroom. Scrivener (1994) described an "enabler" teacher as follows:

> This kind of teacher is confident enough to share control with the learners, or to hand it over entirely to them. Decisions made in her classroom may often be shared or negotiated. In many cases she takes her leads from students; seeing herself as someone whose job is to create the conditions that enable the students to learn for themselves. Sometimes this will involve her in less traditional 'teaching'; she may become a 'guide' or a 'counsellor' or a 'resource of information when needed'. Sometimes, when the class is working well under its own stream, when a lot of autonomous

learning is going on, she may be hardly invisible. (p. 6)

According to Oxford and Nyikos (1989), the use of appropriate LLS enables students to take responsibility for their own learning by enhancing learner autonomy, independence, and self-direction. Studies of good language learners have also highlighted the constructive role of LLS in learning new languages and their importance in the field of language learning. Stern (1975) identified ten common learning strategies of good language learners:

- Personal learning style or positive learning
- Active approach to the learning task
- Tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers
- Technical know-how about how to tackle a language
- Strategies of experimentation and planning with the object of developing the new language into an ordered system, and revising this system progressively
- Constantly searching for meaning
- Willingness to practice
- Willingness to use the language in real communication
- Self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use
- Developing target language more and more as a separate learning system and learning to think in it. (pp. 311-316)

Rubin (1975) stated that good language learners use LLS frequently. She considered using LLS as an important characteristic of good language learners. Figure 2 illustrates Rubin's good language learner strategies:
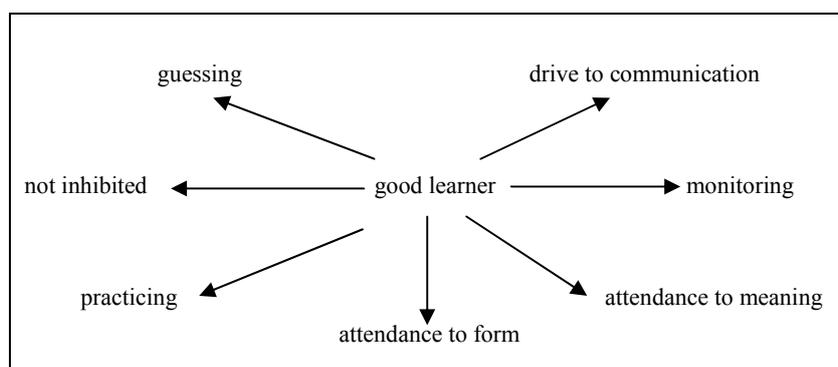
FIGURE 2
Rubin's Good Language Learner Strategies

Language learning strategies are valuable clues that can be taken advantage of by both teachers and learners. Teachers who are aware of their students learning strategies are more sensitive in choosing teaching materials and tasks and try to create an atmosphere in which learners feel they can apply their own language learning strategies with the least interference of teachers. Teachers should provide the necessary teaching conditions so that learners find the possibility to exhibit their learning strategies. Insights into learners' LLS can provide information for teachers and educators that will furnish them with knowledge how to help learners handle language learning more easily and effectively. Learners can use LLS to establish what is known as 'self-directed' learning through which they take responsibility of their own learning.

One of the striking issues in LLS research is that of strategy training. The issue of LLS teachability and the different ways through which learners are taught to use LLS more effectively have widely been investigated by different researchers. The emergence of the term 'learner syllable' indicates the significance of learners' role in language learning and the importance of their learning strategies in managing their learning and directing it towards the desired goals. Huchinson and Waters (1987) defined learner syllable as "the network of knowledge that develops in the learner's brain and which

enables that learner to comprehend and store the later knowledge" (pp. 82-83). The main goal of strategy training or learner training is to help learners use LLS with the most effect and the least effort. According to Cohen (2004), strategy training provides learners with the tools to:

1. Self-diagnose their strengths and weaknesses in language learning.
2. Become aware of what helps them to learn the target language most efficiently.
3. Develop a broad range of problem-solving skills.
4. Experiment with familiar and unfamiliar learning strategies.
5. Make decisions about how to approach language task.
6. Monitor and self-evaluate their performance.

Results of the studies regarding the effectiveness of strategy training are rather mixed. Tang and Moore (1992), for instance, examined the effect of strategy training and concluded that strategy training improved learners' comprehension scores. A number of models for teaching LLS have been developed by some well-known researchers. These models share many features: They focus on developing students' metacognitive understanding of the value of LLS, they highlight the importance of providing multiple practice opportunities, and they emphasize learners' own evaluation. Oxford (1990) developed one of the most practical strategy training models. Based on her model, strategy training involves the following steps:

A. Determining learners' needs.
B. Selecting strategies well.
C. Considering integration of strategy training.
D. Considering motivational issues.
E. Preparing materials and activities.
F. Conducting completely informed training.
G. Evaluating the strategy training.
H. Revising the strategy training.

Cohen (1998) developed 'style and strategies-based instruction' model for teaching LLS. Cohen's SSBI model is largely based on teachers' role in helping learners employ the most appropriate and effective learning strategies. Based on this model, teachers switch roles in the classroom to help learners overcome the different learning difficulties they may encounter as they learn a new language. The different roles of language teachers are:

• Teacher as diagnostician: teacher helps learners identify current strategies.
• Teacher as language learners: teacher shares learning experiences with learners.
• Teacher as learner trainers: teacher trains learners how to use strategies.
• Teacher as coordinator: teacher supervises study plans and monitors difficulties.
• Teacher as coach: teacher provides ongoing guidance on students' progress.

METHOD

Participants

The population from which participants of the present study were drawn included male students of grade one at two high schools, Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Barati, located in Ahvaz. The rationale behind choosing students studying in grade one to be the participants of this study was twofold. Their large population in both high schools enabled the researcher to include as many participants as possible in the study. The second reason was the control of the effect of major on using LLS. Among a pool of more than 650 students studying in grade one in both high schools, 200 students (100 monolingual and 100 bilingual) were randomly selected. It is worth mentioning that both monolingual learners, whose native language is Persian, and bilingual students, whose native language is Arabic and second language is Persian, are available in these high schools. The students' age range was 14 to 16. To ensure the homogeneity of the participants included in the final stage of the study, Fowler and Coe's Nelson Proficiency Test (1976) was administrated to

the whole population. The students who scored one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected as the most homogenous students. Among those who successfully passed the proficiency test, 100 monolingual and 100 bilingual students were randomly selected to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

The instruments used for data collection in this study included: a) SILL questionnaire b) oral interview.

The prime data collection instrument is the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL version 7.0 for EFL/ESL learners) developed by Oxford (1990). SILL is a self-scoring, paper-and-pencil questionnaire. It uses five Likert type responses for each strategy item, ranging from 1 ('never or almost never of me') to 5 ('always true of me'). The 50-item version of SILL, used in this study, comprises six parts as belows:

Part A: Memory strategies (9 items)
Part B: Cognitive strategies (14 items)
Part C: Compensation strategies (6 items)
Part D: Metacognitive strategies (9 items)
Part E: Affective strategies (6 items)
Part F: Social strategies (6 items)

In the Likert scale which is a common scale in questionnaires, the respondents are required to specify their level of agreement to a statement. In terms of mean scores, high use ranges from 3.5 - 5, medium use 2.5 - 3.4, and low use 1.0 - 2.4. The Sill questionnaire has always been used as a key instrument for assessing the frequency of use of language learning strategies. According to Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995), SILL scores range from 0.91 to 0.94 when it was conducted among learners which is an indication of its high internal reliability based on Cronbach Alpha.

The second instrument utilized in this study was an oral interview. In order

to assure that the participants' responses to SILL questionnaire items reflected their own strategic behaviors and thoughts as exactly as possible and to provide the opportunity for comparing the learners' written and oral responses, 10 monolingual and 10 bilingual learners were selected randomly to take part in an oral interview. The SILL questionnaire items were used in this oral interview.

Procedure

When the sample of students was determined randomly, the researcher administrated the SILL questionnaire. For ease of understanding and accuracy of data, the SILL questionnaire was translated into Persian. To avoid any ambiguity, it was checked by English expertise and teachers. The Persian translation of SILL questionnaire was submitted to ten English teachers and expertise and they were asked to comment on it. Also, to ensure learners' understanding of the SILL items and to familiarize them with the different parts of the questionnaire and the way through which they were supposed to answer the SILL items, the researcher explained the whole process before administrating the questionnaire. The SILL questionnaire was then administrated to the 200 students. The response options to the SILL were from a five point Likert-scale for each item. The options given for each item included:

- *Never true of me*: also includes 'almost never true of me'- it doesn't happen very often in your learning behavior
- *Usually not true of me*: it happens occasionally in your learning behavior
- *Somewhat true of me*: it happens in a fairly regular pattern in your learning behavior
- *Usually true of me*: it happens regularly and represents an obvious pattern in your learning behavior
- *Always true of me*: also includes 'almost always true of me'- it happens almost all the time and represents a strong pattern in your learning behavior

It is worth noting that although internal consistency of SILL has been tested worldwide, the researcher conducted a pilot study with 40 learners comparable to the participants of the study. In order to check the internal consistency of the SILL questionnaire for the present study, Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was calculated for each strategy type.

The minimum score for each item was one and the maximum score was five. In order to guarantee the accuracy of responses given to the questionnaire, no time limitation for filling out the questionnaire was considered and the students were asked to read each item carefully and specify their level of agreement with great care. They were asked to mark one of the options showing the frequency with which they used each strategy. The questionnaire administration took approximately 60 minutes to complete. All the students responded to the SILL items and the administration was carried out in Shahid Beheshti high school. After administrating the questionnaire, the researcher asked 10 bilingual and 10 monolingual students to participate in an oral interview. The rationale behind this was to make sure whether or not learners' responses to SILL questionnaire were careful and accurate and reflected their real level of strategy use. The researcher asked different questions regarding the difficulties learners may encounter when learning a new language and the students were required to say what they would do when they encountered such difficulties. The questions were based on SILL questionnaire and researcher's teaching experience. Some of the questions asked in this interview were:

1. Do you try to speak English like native speakers? How often?
2. Do you read for pleasure in English? How often?
3. Do use rhymes to remember new words? How often?
4. Do you practice the English sounds? How often?

Since learners found it difficult to understand and answer the questions in English, the researcher asked the questions in Persian. The researcher wrote the students' names and answers on paper to compare their answers in oral

interview with those of the SILL questionnaire. The administration of the oral interview lasted five days (4 students a day). The time specified to each session was about 5 minutes. Finally, the researcher compared the results obtained from SILL questionnaire with those of oral interview.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the research questions, the performance of both groups of learners on LLS was compared. The results revealed the superiority of bilingual learners in whole strategy use. Table 1 shows the performance of each group of learners on each category of LLS.

TABLE 1
Bilingual and Monolingual Learners' Performance on Each Strategy Category

Strategy	Monolinguals		Bilinguals		t obs	df	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Memory	2.41	0.64	2.11	0.74	2.7730	198	1.980
Cognitive	2.18	0.86	2.49	0.66	2.4906		
Compensation	2.48	0.70	3.24	0.91	7.9262		
Metacognitive	2.27	0.72	2.46	0.91	0.7731		
Affective	3.52	0.50	1.99	0.46	22.22		
Social	4.07	0.34	4.15	0.39	1.54		p<.05

As shown in table 1, the observed value of t in four strategy categories (memory, cognitive, compensation, and affective) is greater than the critical value of t (1.980) and this means that monolingual and bilingual learners' performance on these strategies is significantly different. Table 2 shows the most frequently used direct strategies by both groups.

TABLE 2
Most Frequently Used Direct Strategies of Bilinguals and Monolinguals

			Bilinguals
Strategy type	**Rank**	**Item number**	**Strategy**
Memory	1	8	I review English lessons often.
Compensation	2	25	When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.
Compensation	3	24	To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.
Compensation	4	29	If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same.
Cognitive	5	10	I say or write new English words several times
Memory	6	7	I physically act out new English words.
Compensation	7	26	I make up new words if I don't know the right ones in English.
			Monolinguals
Strategy type	**Rank**	**Item number**	**Strategy**
Compensation	1	25	When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.
Cognitive	2	10	I say or write new English words several times.
Cognitive	3	12	I practice the sounds of English.
Memory	4	6	I use flashcards to remember new English words.
Memory	5	7	I physically act out new English words.

Table 3 displays the most frequently used indirect strategies by both monolingual and bilingual learners.

TABLE 3
Most Frequently Used Indirect Strategies of Bilinguals and Monolinguals

Strategy type	Rank	Item no.	Strategy
Bilinguals			
Social	1	45	If I don't understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down/say again.
Social	2	47	I practice my English with other students.
Social	3	48	I ask for help from English speakers.
Social	4	46	I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.
Affective	5	44	I talk to someone else about how I feel when learning English.
Metacognitive	6	35	I look for people I can talk to in English.
Metacognitive	7	32	I pay attention when someone is speaking English.
Monolinguals			
Strategy type	**Rank**	**Item no.**	**Strategy**
Social	1	46	I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.
Social	2	47	I practice my English with other students.
Affective	3	39	I try to relax when I am afraid of using English.
Affective	4	44	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I talk.
Metacognitive	5	33	I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.

To compare the whole strategy use among members of both groups, the rank order of LLS used by bilingual and monolingual learners is displayed in Table 4. Based on the obtained results, both bilingual and monolingual learners tended to use social strategies with high frequency. Memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies were used by both groups with a low frequency.

TABLE 4
Comparing the Whole Strategy Use

Strategy	Rank	Mean	SD
Bilinguals			
Social	1	4.15	0.39
Compensation	2	3.24	0.91
Cognitive	3	2.49	0.66
Metacognitive	4	2.46	0.91
Memory	5	2.11	0.74
Affective	6	1.99	0.46
Monolinguals			
Social	1	4.07	0.34
Affective	2	3.50	0.50
Compensation	3	2.43	0.70
Memory	4	2.42	0.64
Metacognitive	5	2.27	0.72
Cognitive	6	2.18	0.86

To compare the bilingual and monolingual learners on LLS use, the minimum and maximum scores reported for each strategy category were obtained. The minimum and maximum scores reflected learners' performance on each category and were consistent with learners' obtained means and also their level of strategy use. Table 5 tabulates the minimum and maximum scores on each strategy type.

TABLE 5
Minimum and Maximum Scores on Each Strategy Type

Strategy type	Bilinguals		Monolinguals	
	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.
Memory	1.10	4	1	4.2
Cognitive	1.70	4.20	1.40	3.80
Compensation	2	5	1.50	4.50
Metacognitive	1	4	1	4.50
Affective	1	3	3	4
Social	3.60	5	3.50	5

According to the obtained results, both bilingual and monolingual learners employed memory strategies with low level of frequency. Although

monolingual learners tended to use more memory strategies than their bilingual peers, the whole memory strategy use was reported to be low among all participants. A likely explanation is that Iranian learners have not been trained to use their memory appropriately when learning a new language. In fact, learners are not trained how to store or retrieve the information. Another reason regarding the low frequency of using memory strategies might be due to the specific memory techniques reported in SILL with which Iranian learners are not familiar. Techniques such as making a mental picture of the situation in which the word is used or using rhymes to remember the new words seem to be beyond Iranian EFL learners' heads. The results of the current study on memory strategies contradict the common assumption that Asian learners prefer rote memorization to communicative strategies. The same as memory strategies, both groups reported using cognitive strategies with low level of frequency. The difference between the two groups is that bilinguals outperformed their monolingual peers and this difference was significant. As related to the low frequency of cognitive strategy use, one reason might be the items which represent the cognitive strategies. Some items in SILL are difficult to be understood and performed by Iranian high school students. Some items are too hard for Iranian learners to be tackled and thus they are simply avoided by them. Some items such as 'I write reports in English', 'I try to find patterns in English' and 'I first skim a passage then go back and read it carefully' are among the least frequently used strategies. The results of the study and the data analysis also revealed that bilingualism has a positive effect on cognitive strategy use. This may be due to the advanced cognitive skills which bilinguals are believed to possess as a result of their previous language learning experience. As Nation and McLaughlin (1986) stated bilinguals are superior to monolinguals when it comes to cognitive strategies. The third strategy to be discussed is compensation strategy. The first point to be referred to is the significant difference between monolinguals and bilinguals on the use of this strategy. While bilinguals used compensation strategies with low level of frequency, the bilinguals tended to use them with high level of frequency. One possible

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reason for the significant difference between the two groups' performance on compensation strategies is that bilingual learners with the previous language learning experience are more ready to take risks and use new language in different situations and with different people, and thus try to continue communicating with others and overcome the linguistic problems that may hinder communication with others. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Vossoughi and Ebrahimi's (2003) research who found that bilinguals used more compensation strategies than monolinguals. The low frequency of metacognitive strategies among both groups contradict the results obtained in Riazi and Rahimi's (2005) research which indicated high level of metacognitive strategy use among Iranian learners. One justification for the weak performance of participants on metaconitive strategies might be that such strategies involve somehow difficult and complex tasks for which Iranian learners have not gained any training. Learners do not know how to plan, monitor, or evaluate their own learning and this leads them to avoid such problematic strategies. The low frequency of affective strategy use among bilinguals in this study accords with the results obtained from Peacock and Ho's (2003) study. Also, they are consistent with Vossoughi and Ebrahimi's (2003) research findings; however, the high frequency of affective strategies among monolingual learners contradicts the results of previous studies. One likely reason for this difference between the two groups is that monolingual learners, due to little language learning experience, use language in different situations more sensitively. They do not take risks and thus stop using language when they feel afraid of using it. Both groups reported high level of frequency in using social strategies. Although the results of this study contradict Riazi and Rahimi's (2005) results which indicated that Iranian learners used social strategies with a low frequency, they are consistent with those obtained in Vossoughi and Ebrahimi's (2003) and Wharton's (2000) research results which revealed high frequency of use of social strategies. The high level of social strategy use among Iranian bilingual and monolingual learners may be attributed to several factors one of the most important of which is the fact that Iran is a context in which English is

considered to be a foreign language. Since learners do not find any opportunity to use English outside the formal setting of the classroom, they try to be more interactive inside the classroom to practice English as much as possible taking into account that classroom is the only place for them to practice English. The second factor which seems to be influential in the high use of social strategies is the easy and comprehensive format of the SILL social strategies. The low level of strategy use among Iranian learners who participated in this study and also some other previous studies conducted in Iranian context is a clear indication of the unsuccessful teaching methods and ineffective materials used in teaching foreign languages in Iranian educational system. Learning strategies are regarded as strong indicators of learners' success in language learning. The more a learner employs different types of appropriate strategies, the more effective his learning process becomes. In Iran, the issue of strategy training has completely been ignored in teacher training programs. The result of such ignorance is that teacher learners do not learn anything about strategy training approaches and accordingly they cannot help learners improve their learning strategies. The interesting thing that was explored based on the results of this study is that learners, both bilingual and monolingual, were not successful in employing those strategies which needed systematic training such as memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. In sum, Since Iranian learners have not been trained well to use learning strategies, they tended to use them with low frequency.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study offer some implications for learners, teachers, and syllabus designers.

EFL learners should be aware of the LLS they use so that they can manage their language learning more effectively. Learners, both monolingual and bilingual, must have sufficient knowledge about their LLS so that they can

decide which to develop and strengthen and which to quit. Pedagogically, the findings of this study suggest that teachers should be aware of their learners' LLS preferences to assist them to be successful language learners. Unfortunately, language teachers in Iran tend to play the role of transmitters of knowledge in the classroom without taking into consideration learners' learning strategies or styles. The teacher-centered teaching approach adopted by most English teachers in Iran leads them to ignore learners' learning strategies and preferences and thus limiting learners' role in language learning. Furthermore, the findings of this study may have some implications in teacher training programs. The important issue to be addressed here is that teachers who are going to teach in bilingual schools should be trained differently. In fact such teachers have to work in an environment in which culturally and linguistically different learners study and they may find it necessary to assign different assignments to each group. Finally, the findings of the current study might have some implications for syllabus designers. They may decide to design separate materials and courses for bilingual and monolingual language learners to meet each group's educational needs.

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